

# HELP WANTED:

Highlights from the  
Second Quarter, 2004  
Louisiana Job Vacancy Survey

Houma Regional Findings

Louisiana Department of Labor  
Developed by the Research & Statistics Division  
for the Office of Workforce Development



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# WHERE are the vacancies?

## Houma Vacancies by Occupational Group

Occupational Group	Number of Vacancies	Employment in Occupation	Percent Requiring More than a High School Diploma	Percent Requiring at Least Some Work Experience	Median Hourly Wage Offered
Transportation & Material Moving	339	12,240	42.04%	71.92%	\$11.25
Production	327	8,310	31.40%	97.55%	\$11.00
Personal Care & Service	278	1,450	0.00%	82.37%	\$5.75
Sales & Related	254	8,870	14.90%	80.89%	\$5.65
Office & Administrative Support	241	12,420	27.03%	30.26%	\$5.50
Construction & Extraction	223	7,490	51.08%	94.00%	\$12.00
Farming, Fishing & Forestry	143	240	0.00%	33.57%	\$6.00
Non-Classifiable Occupations	72	NA	24.23%	24.23%	\$5.85
Healthcare Support	58	1,600	0.00%	0.00%	\$6.00
Food Preparation & Serving Related	33	5,890	0.00%	0.00%	\$5.85
Education, Training & Library	29	5,970	0.00%	0.00%	\$5.15
Installation, Maintenance & Repair	24	5,220	0.00%	55.56%	\$8.00
Management	20	4,190	40.68%	100.00%	\$16.02
Architecture & Engineering	12	1,090	65.71%	100.00%	\$12.00
Healthcare Practitioner & Technical	8	3,980	100.00%	0.00%	\$19.25
Business & Financial Operations	4	1,580	100.00%	100.00%	\$28.87
Community & Social Services	3	740	66.67%	100.00%	\$10.01
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports & Media	0	400	NA	NA	NA
Building & Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	0	2,110	NA	NA	NA
Computer & Mathematical Science	0	240	NA	NA	NA
Legal	0	310	NA	NA	NA
Life, Physical & Social Science	0	240	NA	NA	NA
Protective Service	0	1,400	NA	NA	NA
<b>Total, All Occupational Groups</b>	<b>2,067</b>	<b>85,980</b>	<b>24.63%</b>	<b>67.59%</b>	<b>\$8.00</b>

## Job titles with many openings

Retail Salespersons (196 openings)  
 Personal & Home Care Aides (193)  
 Customer Service Representatives (139)  
 Sailors & Marine Oilers (123)  
 Captains, Mates & Pilots of Water Vessels (118)  
 Plumbers, Pipefitters & Steamfitters (114)  
 Crushing, Grinding, Polishing, Mixing & Blending Workers (76)  
 Agricultural Equipment Operators (72)  
 Roustabouts, Oil & Gas (63)  
 Home Health Aides (58)

## Houma Vacancies by Industry Group

Industry Group	Number of Vacancies	Industry Employment	Vacancy Rate	Median Hourly Wage Offered
Trade, Transportation & Utilities	624	21,801	2.86%	\$10.00
Education & Health Services	342	18,883	1.81%	\$5.75
Construction	265	5,844	4.53%	\$11.50
Natural Resources & Mining	249	6,700	3.72%	\$10.00
Manufacturing	177	9,347	1.89%	\$15.00
Financial Activities	160	5,485	2.92%	\$5.50
Professional & Business Services	89	7,900	1.13%	\$12.00
Leisure & Hospitality	82	6,319	1.30%	\$5.85
Other Services	79	2,153	3.67%	\$10.00
Information	0	1,014	NA	NA
<b>Total, All Industry Groups</b>	<b>2,067</b>	<b>85,446</b>	<b>2.42%</b>	<b>\$8.00</b>

## WHAT do these numbers mean ?

There were 2,067 vacancies in the Houma Regional Labor Market Area (RLMA), for a vacancy rate of 2.42 percent, which means that for every 100 jobs, approximately two were vacant at the time of the survey. Two blue collar occupational groups -- Transportation & Material Moving and Production occupations -- comprised nearly a third of all vacancies in the Houma area. One surprising finding was that Healthcare Practitioner & Technical occupations exhibited relatively low demand, with only eight reported openings. This occupational group includes Registered Nurses, which are usually in short supply.

Education and experience requirements varied widely across occupational groups. For example, nearly 41 percent of Management openings required education beyond a high school degree, and *all* of these openings required at least some work experience. By contrast, Food Preparation & Serving Related occupations required very little education and experience: *none* of these vacancies required more than a high school diploma or previous work experience. Wages varied by occupation, as well. The overall median wage offered across all vacancies was \$8.00 per hour, but wages ranged from \$5.15 per hour in Education, Training & Library occupations to \$28.87 in Business & Financial Operations occupations.

The table above shows Houma area vacancies by industry group. (See the sidebar on page 5 of this report for more on the differences between *industries* and *occupations*.) The Trade, Transportation & Utilities industry had the greatest number of vacancies at 624, accounting for just over 30 percent of all openings in the area. These vacancies were relatively high paying; the median hourly wage for vacancies in this industry was \$10.00, which was \$2.00 above the median hourly wage offered in vacancies across all industries.

# A SNAPSHOT

## of Houma job vacancies

Overall, Houma area employers were seeking experienced workers. Nearly 70 percent of all reported vacancies required at least some previous work experience. Twenty-six percent required some experience in any field; another 28 percent required up to two years of experience in the same field, and 14 percent required over two years of experience in the same field.

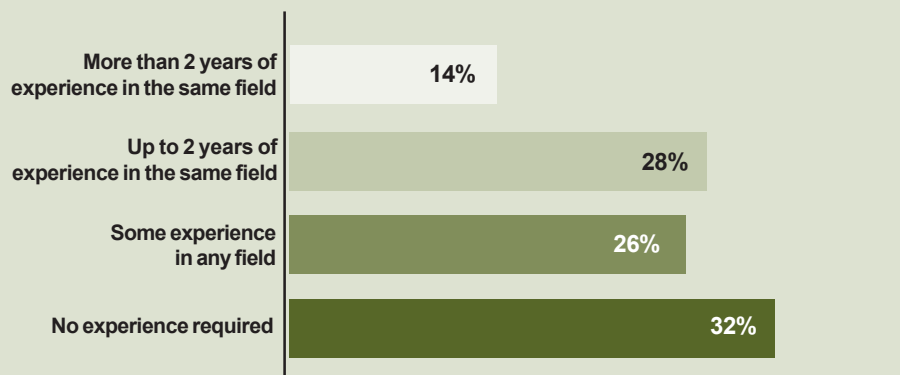
On the other hand, a mere *four percent* of Houma's vacancies required a four-year college degree or higher. Three percent required a bachelor's degree, while less than one percent required an advanced degree. The sidebar to the left provides more information on education levels in job vacancies.

For about 41 percent of all job vacancies in the Houma RLMA, employers offered wages of \$7.00 per hour or less. The largest share of vacancies (37 percent) offered between \$5.16 and \$7.00 per hour. At the other end of the spectrum, approximately seven percent of all vacancies offered wages of more than \$16.00 per hour.

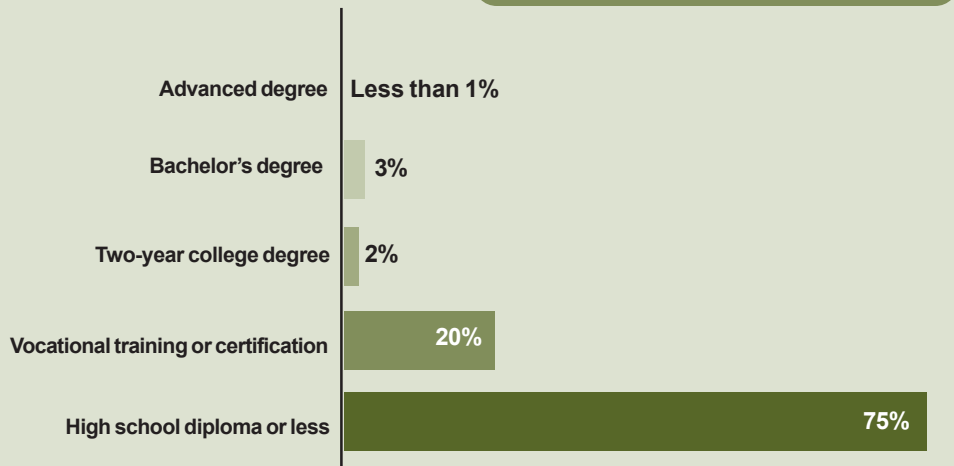
### Why do most vacancies require a high school diploma or less?

The picture painted by these figures may look grim, but there is a good reason why most vacancies require little education. Simply put, occupations that require less education tend to have more turnover, all else equal. The latest estimate by the Bureau of Labor Statistics for median years of job tenure for professional and managerial workers was 4.8 in 2002. By contrast, sales workers, such as retail sales clerks, stayed a median 2.7 years and service workers, such as food service employees, stayed a median 2.4 years. Since retail sales clerks, food service workers, and other such jobs have high turnover, it stands to reason that these occupations, which require little formal education, will have many vacancies at any given point in time. To get a sense of the demand for workers over and above turnover levels, see the "hiring demand index" on page 7 of this report.

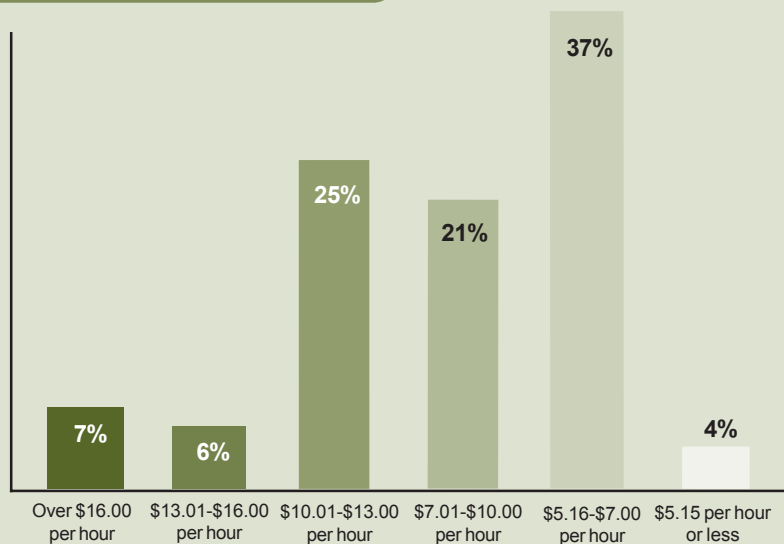
### How much experience do Houma job vacancies require?



### How much education do Houma job vacancies require?



### How much do Houma job vacancies pay?



### What is the difference between an *industry* and an *occupation*?

An industry is a group of businesses, categorized according to the goods and services they provide. An occupation is a group of workers, categorized according to the skills they have and what they do on the job. For example, *health care* is an industry that includes many occupations -- doctors, nurses, administrators, and secretaries, to name a few. But *secretary* is an occupation that can be found in almost any industry. Each industry contains a variety of occupations, and many occupations -- such as janitors, computer support professionals, and database analysts -- can be found in every industry.

# What did EMPLOYERS say?

Employers' Responses to the Open-Ended Question:

*"In trying to fill this position,  
what is the greatest difficulty you have faced, if any?"\**

Reported Difficulty	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses
<i>"We have been unable to find qualified applicants."</i>	14	15.9%
<i>"The applicants do not have the appropriate credentials." (Applicants meet all requirements other than the required certification certificates or licenses.)</i>	4	4.5%
<i>"We have been unable to find applicants with the specific experience / training / skills / certification that we are seeking."</i>	15	17.0%
<i>"There is a shortage of people in this occupation."</i>	8	9.1%
<i>"[Some aspect of the job] is undesirable to applicants." (The position requires odd hours / the position is temporary / the position involves shift work)</i>	13	14.8%
<i>"The work ethic of people, once they are hired, is unacceptable." (People don't show up for work / if they do show up, they don't work / they cannot pass drug tests)</i>	4	4.5%
<i>Some other difficulty mentioned</i>	4	4.5%
<i>No response</i>	26	29.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>99.8%</b>

\* Confidentiality concerns precluded publishing employers' verbatim responses. However, LDOL analysts reviewed all responses to the question above, grouped similar responses together, then re-worded the similar responses into one representative sentence or phrase, as shown above. Data shown in this table are unweighted. Percentages may not total to 100 percent due to rounding.

Major Occupational Group	Number of Vacancies	Vacancy Rate	Hiring Demand Index*	Median Number of Days Position was Vacant
Transportation & Material Moving	339	2.77%	Average	90
Production	327	3.94%	High	146
Personal Care & Service	278	19.17%	High	365
Sales & Related	254	2.86%	Average	30
Office & Administrative Support	241	1.94%	Low	Always open
Construction & Extraction	223	2.98%	Average	30
Farming, Fishing & Forestry	143	59.58%	High	720
Non-Classifiable Occupations	72	NA	NA	14
Healthcare Support	58	3.63%	High	NA
Food Preparation & Serving Related	33	0.56%	Low	30
Education, Training & Library	29	0.49%	Low	7
Installation, Maintenance & Repair	24	0.46%	Low	14
Management	20	0.48%	Low	180
Architecture & Engineering	12	1.10%	Low	1
Healthcare Practitioner & Technical	8	0.20%	Low	90
Business & Financial Operations	4	0.25%	Low	21
Community & Social Services	3	0.41%	Low	7
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports & Media	0	0.00%	NA	NA
Building & Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	0	0.00%	NA	NA
Computer & Mathematical Science	0	0.00%	NA	NA
Legal	0	0.00%	NA	NA
Life, Physical & Social Science	0	0.00%	NA	NA
Protective Service	0	0.00%	NA	NA
<b>Total, All Occupations</b>	<b>2,067</b>	<b>2.40%</b>		<b>35</b>

Taking all of the labor shortage indicators together (vacancy rates, the hiring demand index, and the number of days positions remained vacant) two occupational groups appeared likely to be experiencing moderate to serious labor shortages: Personal Care & Service, and Farming, Fishing & Forestry. Both of these groups had vacancy rates much higher than the overall average of 2.4 percent; both scored high on the hiring demand index, and in both occupational groups, positions tended to remain vacant for very long periods of time, suggesting that employers had difficulties finding suitable candidates to fill positions. Production occupations also appeared likely to be experiencing mild shortages.

\*The Hiring Demand Index indicates whether demand for workers in an occupational group is more than what we would expect from turnover levels alone. A "high" score on the Hiring Demand Index means that, all else equal, a labor shortage is **likely**, because there are more openings than we would expect to see from normal turnover alone. A "low" score means that a labor shortage is **unlikely**, because there are **not** more openings than we would expect to see from turnover alone. See the back cover of this report for more details on this measure.

Are there  
**LABOR SHORTAGES**  
 in Houma?



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Second Quarter 2004 Job Vacancy Survey Findings are available for the state of Louisiana as well as all eight regional labor market areas (RLMAs). To order copies, or for more information, please contact the Louisiana Department of Labor's Research and Statistics Unit at (225) 342-3141, or toll-free at (888) 302-7662. You may also download any Job Vacancy Survey product from our Web site: [www.LAWORKS.net/qm\\_JVSoverview.asp](http://www.LAWORKS.net/qm_JVSoverview.asp).

## TECHNICAL NOTES

for the Second Quarter 2004  
Job Vacancy Survey

### THE SAMPLE

The Job Vacancy Survey was based on a random sample of Louisiana business establishments covered by Louisiana's unemployment insurance tax laws. The sample was stratified by firm size, region (including all eight regional labor market areas in Louisiana) and industry. This sample excludes certain types of establishments: small businesses with self-employed owners and some non-profit and religious organizations which are not covered by UI tax laws. In addition, the sample is limited to **private employers only**. **The vacancies reported in this study do not include openings with any federal, state, or local government entities in Louisiana.** The total sample size was 9,544. The overall response rate for this survey was 39.1%.

### JOB VACANCY RATES

Vacancy rates are computed as the number of vacancies in an occupation divided by the total employment in that occupation. A vacancy rate of five percent means that for every 100 jobs, five were vacant at the time of the survey.

### HIRING DEMAND INDEX

The Hiring Demand Index presented in this report measures demand for labor over and above the normal demand due to turnover. This measure, first constructed by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, is computed as follows:

$$(\text{Job Vacancy Rate in the Occupation} / \text{Job Vacancy Rate in all occupations})$$

divided by

$$(\text{Turnover rate in the occupation} / \text{Turnover rate in all occupations})$$

Job vacancy rates are calculated as discussed above, and national turnover rates were provided by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development. They were calculated using Current Population Survey (CPS) Job Tenure Supplement microdata.

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